The fall in production during 1999-2000 & 2000-01 was due to severe drought prevailing in the major oilseeds producing States.

(c) The Technology Mission on Oilseeds which was set up in 1986, has launched a Centrally Sponsored Oilseeds Production Programme (OPP) in 28 States covering 407 selected districts in the country to increase the production & the productivity of oilseeds. Under the scheme, financial assistance is provided on various inputs like production and distribution of seed, distribution of seed minikits, distribution of improved farms implements, sprinkler sets, rhizobium culture and PSB/micro nutrients etc. In order to disseminate the production technology amongst farmers, frontline demonstrations are organised by the I.C.A.R. Besides, block and integrated pest management demonstrations are organised through State Department of Agriculture. A new component of crash programme for quality seed production of groundnut and soyabean has also been introduced during the Ninth Plan. In order to meet the demand of seed during natural calamities, a seed bank programme has also been introduced during the Ninth Plan.

In order to ensure the remunerative prices for oilseed growers, the Government has been announcing the Minimum Support Prices (MSP) for oilseeds every year. In case the market prices fall below the MSP, NAFED carries-out purchase operation of oilseeds.

The Government has also increased the import duty on different edible oils w.e.f. 1.3.2001 to protect the interest of indigenous oilseed growers.

Relief to farmers against natural calamities

†2743. SHRIMATI SAROJ DUBEY: Will the Minister of AGRICULTURE be pleased to state:

(a) whether Government are aware that most of the crops of farmers throughout the country are destroyed every year by natural calamities;

(b) if so, whether Government propose to take any effective steps to provide relief to the farmers distressed under these circumstances;

(c) if so, the details thereof; and

(d) if not, the reasons therefor?

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†Original notice of the question was received in Hindi.

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF AGRICULTURE (SHRI SHRIPAD YESSO NAIK): (a) to (d) Natural calamities do cause damage of varying magnitude to crops, depending on intensity of the calamity. However, there is no evidence to suggest that most of the crops are damaged every year by such calamities. There is built-in mechanism for providing relief to farmers from the Calamity Relief Fund of each State which, according to recommendations of the Eleventh Finance Commission, consists of 75% of the annual allocation contributed by the Centre and the balance 25% contributed by the respective States. As regards calamities of severe nature, additional assistance is considered from the National Calamity Contingency Fund. Also, the items and norms of relief assistance provides for payment of input subsidy to small and marginal farmers for damaged crops.

Quality of processed foods

2744. SHRI SATISH PRADHAN: Will the Minister of AGRICULTURE be pleased to state:

(a) whether Government have taken or propose to take any special steps for improving the quality of its processed foods; and

(b) if so, the details thereof?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE DEPARTMENT OF FOOD PROCESSING INDUSTRIES IN THE MINISTRY OF AGRICULTURE (SHRI TH. CHAOBA SINGH): (a) and (b) The Agro Food Processing Industries are required to comply with provisions of the Prevention of Food Adulteration Act, the Fruit Products Order, the Milk and Milk Products Order, the Meat Food Products Order, the Weights and Measures (Packaged Commodities) Rules, 1977. To ensure that the hygiene and food quality of food products is maintained at appropriate standards, the provisions and stipulations of these Orders and Rules are continuously monitored and amended from time to time, as required. Further, Government has already initiated action to harmonize the domestic standards with International standards.

Tardy earthquake rehabilitation work in Gujarat

2745. SHRI A. VIJAYA RAGHAVAN: Will the Minister of AGRICULTURE be pleased to state:

(a) whether there has been tardy progress in relief/rehabilitation work in the quake-hit areas of Gujarat;